



**Testimony: Alex Spurrier, Research and Policy Manager**

*Education Committee - Friday, March 15, 2013*

My name is Alex Spurrier and I am the Research and Policy Manager for the Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now (ConnCAN), a statewide advocacy organization focused on ensuring that every child in Connecticut has access to a high-quality public education.

I want to thank Chairman Fleischmann, Chairwoman Stillman, and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am here today to testify in opposition to H.B. 1098, An Act Concerning the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula.

We already know the problems with school finance in Connecticut. If passed and signed into law, this measure would impose yet another study to determine what nearly all stakeholders agree on: our school funding formula is broken, resulting in an inequitable system that has produced our state's worst-in-the-nation achievement gap.

Connecticut has a long history of studying the flaws of the ECS formula. For example:

- In 2003, a Blue Ribbon Commission on Property Tax Burdens found that the town wealth measure in the ECS formula needed an overhaul.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2007, the Governor's Commission on School Finance found, "a number of elements in the original formula have been eroded or completely eliminated over time."<sup>2</sup>
- In 2011, the State Board of Education's Ad-Hoc Committee on ECS and Choice Funding approved design principles to guide the overhaul of the ECS formula.<sup>3</sup>
- That same year, the Appropriations Committee raised S.B. 1195, which would have completely overhauled the ECS formula to include all public school students in an equitable funding system.<sup>4</sup>
- Two months ago, the Task Force to Study State Education Funding issued their final report, which includes specific recommendations for updating the ECS formula.<sup>5</sup>

It is not likely that the study resulting from the passage of H.B. 1098 would contribute anything to this body of work that doesn't already exist in one form or another. The only thing it is certain to accomplish will be to further delay meaningful school finance reform.

If we are serious about ensuring access to a great public education for every child, we must take a stand — as a state — and work to implement reforms that will fund all public school students fairly.

Our children cannot afford another year of talking to write a report that is likely to collect dust on a shelf. Instead, let's work together to build a system that delivers on the promise of a great public education for all of our students by funding all students fairly, across all our public schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Blue Ribbon Commission on Property Tax Burdens Final Report. 2003.

<http://www.cga.ct.gov/pd/FullBlueRibbonCommissionReportFinal.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Governor M. Jodi Rell's Commission on School Finance Final Report. 2007.

<http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/budget/educationfinance/edufinancefinalreport.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ad-Hoc Committee on Education Cost Sharing and Choice Funding Core Values and Design Principles. 2011.

[http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/board/February02\\_2011\\_Action\\_Items.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/board/February02_2011_Action_Items.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Senate Bill 1195. 2011.

[http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&bill\\_num=1195&which\\_year=2011&SUBMIT1.x=-646&SUBMIT1.y=0&SUBMIT1=Normal](http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&bill_num=1195&which_year=2011&SUBMIT1.x=-646&SUBMIT1.y=0&SUBMIT1=Normal)

<sup>5</sup> Task Force to Study State Education Funding Final Report. 2013.

<http://www.cga.ct.gov/ed/CostSharing/Documents/2013/ECS%20TASK%20FORCE%20Final%20Report%201-23-13.pdf>